

# WORSHIP SERVICE - 2.20.2022

## THE SEVEN BOWLS

### I. INTRODUCTION

**MAIN POINT:** God is glorified as he executes judgment on unrepentant humanity, whose punishment fits the offense they have committed.

#### Revelation 15:1-8

Then I saw another sign in heaven, great and amazing, seven angels with seven plagues, which are the last, for with them the wrath of God is finished.

2 And I saw what appeared to be a sea of glass mingled with fire—and also those who had conquered the beast and its image and the number of its name, standing beside the sea of glass with harps of God in their hands. 3 And they sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying,

“Great and amazing are your deeds, O Lord God the Almighty! Just and true are your ways, O King of the nations!

4 Who will not fear, O Lord, and glorify your name? For you alone are holy. All nations will come and worship you, for your righteous acts have been revealed.”

5 After this I looked, and the sanctuary of the tent of witness in heaven was opened, 6 and out of the sanctuary came the seven angels with the seven plagues, clothed in pure, bright linen, with golden sashes around their chests. 7 And one of the four living creatures gave to the seven angels seven golden bowls full of the wrath of God who lives forever and ever, 8 and the sanctuary was filled with smoke from the glory of God and from his power, and no one could enter the sanctuary until the seven plagues of the seven angels were finished.

### II. THE SONG OF HEAVEN

- This passage introduces the next parallel cycle of symbolic visions, the Seven Angels with the seven plagues, who are given the seven golden bowls full of the wrath of God.
- It's an interlocking piece. V1-4 rightly belongs to the last vision and vv 5-8 belong to the next.
- This vision, like the others, has a discernible pattern of introducing a heavenly scene before the series of judgments are unleashed on unrepentant humanity.
- We are summoned by these heavenly visions to gaze upon the Sovereign God, to gaze upon his beauty, power, majesty, might, and glory.
- We are lifted beyond the earthly realm to the true spiritual reality behind all of the affairs and events of the world—the sovereign God who

is in complete control of his universe.

## THE NEW EXODUS

- The sea of glass is something we saw before in ch4 in the throne scene.
- Scripture pictures the sea as the place of the sea monster, Leviathan, the sea with its foaming, churning waves portrays chaos, it's the place where evil emanates from.
- The four evil beasts in Daniel's vision come out from the sea (Dan. 7:3), and the beast rises up out of the sea in John's vision (Rev. 13:1).
- Here the sea is like glass, the sea has been calmed by the sovereign God. The Lamb's defeat of the dragon has calmed the devil's watery abode.
- The sea of glass is mingled with fire. This is an allusion to Daniel 7:10-11 where a river of fire comes out from God's throne to judge the beast.
- The sea of glass mingled with fire is a heavenly counterpart to God's deliverance of his people at the Red Sea.
- The Exodus account becomes a type of the deliverance of those who have been redeemed by the blood of the Lamb.
- The picture is of the redeemed, singing the new song in heaven, pictured with harps in their hands, singing the song of deliverance.
  
- And what are they singing? The Song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb.
- The song of Moses is the song Moses sung extolling God and the miraculous deliverance of his people. (Exodus 15)
- It's also called the Song of the Lamb. The Lamb delivered his people fully and finally so they could enter into the promised rest. This is a far greater deliverance that was accomplished. This is the new Exodus.
- The saints, like the Israelites, are delivered from idolatrous oppression at the hands of the beast, through the plagues sent by God.
- So these two songs are one and the same. The people of God both the OT and NT, believers in every age are united in Christ Jesus.
- The saints are praising God and extolling His character.
  
- The ones standing in heaven worshiping the Lamb are the ones who overcame the temptation to compromise their faith, who suffered under the wrath of the beast, who did not bow down to worship his image, and who refused the mark of his name, even when it cost them everything in this life.
- Have you taken into consideration that this is your destiny?
- Have you worshiped God for his salvation and righteous judgment?
- These visions inspire us and motivate us to worship and to persevere!
- Those who overcome sing the song of Moses and the song of the Lamb NOW and until the day we will join in with the choir of the saints in glory!

## III. THE SEVEN ANGELS AND THE SEVEN PLAGUES

- v1 Then I saw another sign in heaven, great and amazing, seven angels with seven plagues, which are the last, for with them the wrath of God is finished.
- A more helpful translation would be 'seven angels who have authority over the seven plagues.'
- "*Which are the last, for with them the wrath of God is finished.*"
- 'Last' means the last of the sevenfold visions John saw. It was the order he saw them as they came to him.

- The plagues are also 'last' in that the statement, 'for with them the wrath of God is finished,' shows the intensification of judgment happening in the latter days.
  - Remember, the latter days are the period of time between Christ's resurrection and ascension, and his return.
  - **v5-6** After this I looked, and the sanctuary of the tent of witness in heaven was opened, 6 and out of the sanctuary came the seven angels with the seven plagues, clothed in pure, bright linen, with golden sashes around their chests.
  - The seven angels are clothed the same way Christ is pictured in Rev 1:13. They are identified with him because they are his representatives carrying out the judgments that will follow. They are commissioned to execute the seven plagues.
  - Why are these judgments called seven plagues?
  - The only place outside of the book of Revelation in Scripture where the same phrase, seven plagues, in Greek or Hebrew is found, is in Leviticus 26:21.
  - **Leviticus 26:21** "Then if you walk contrary to me and will not listen to me, I will continue striking you, sevenfold for your sins."
  - The Septuagint translates it, "I will further bring upon you seven plagues according to your sins."
  - Four times in Lev. 26 it is repeated that God will judge them sevenfold if they become unfaithful.
  - The chapter has repeated warnings to repent of idolatry or they will fall into successively worse ordeals and punishment.
  - Psalm 79:12 a psalm containing a prayer of deliverance asking God to pay back sevenfold to those taunt God and his people.
  - We are looking at the comprehensive, complete, judgment of God upon the idolatrous and rebellious.
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- 7 And one of the four living creatures gave to the seven angels seven golden bowls full of the wrath of God who lives forever and ever.
  - This seems to symbolize the priestly ministry of the seven angels.
  - Recall the golden bowls of incense in Rev. 5:8. These were said to be filled with the prayers of the saints.
  - In Rev. 8:3, an angel comes and stands at the altar with a golden censer to offer with the prayers of all the saints on the golden altar before the throne. The smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, rises before God.
  - Put this together and what you have with the bowl judgments is that they are coming as God's answer to the saints' prayers for vindication.
  - **Rev. 6:9-11** When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the witness they had borne. 10 They cried out with a loud voice, "O Sovereign Lord, holy and true, how long before you will judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?" 11 Then they were each given a white robe and told to rest a little longer, until the number of their fellow servants and their brothers should be complete, who were to be killed as they themselves had been.
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- John sees the sanctuary fill with smoke from the glory of God and from his power.
  - God's presence is so awesome and terrifying in expressing his wrath that it evokes the image of the tabernacle, when God's glory would fill it and no one could enter it. (1 Kings 8:10-11)
  - The point is that no one, not any of the powerful heavenly creatures, or any other thing in the universe, can hold back God from executing his righteous judgments.
  - We can draw comfort from the fact that even though there is what seems to us a delay in the answer to the prayer of the saints, God will answer those prayers.

## IV. THE SEVEN BOWLS OF GOD'S WRATH

### Revelation 16:1-11

Then I heard a loud voice from the temple telling the seven angels, "Go and pour out on the earth the seven bowls of the wrath of God."

2 So the first angel went and poured out his bowl on the earth, and harmful and painful sores came upon the people who bore the mark of the beast and worshiped its image.

3 The second angel poured out his bowl into the sea, and it became like the blood of a corpse, and every living thing died that was in the sea.

4 The third angel poured out his bowl into the rivers and the springs of water, and they became blood. 5 And I heard the angel in charge of the waters say,

"Just are you, O Holy One, who is and who was, for you brought these judgments.

6 For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and you have given them blood to drink. It is what they deserve!"

7 And I heard the altar saying, "Yes, Lord God the Almighty, true and just are your judgments!"

8 The fourth angel poured out his bowl on the sun, and it was allowed to scorch people with fire. 9 They were scorched by the fierce heat, and they cursed the name of God who had power over these plagues. They did not repent and give him glory.

10 The fifth angel poured out his bowl on the throne of the beast, and its kingdom was plunged into darkness. People gnawed their tongues in anguish 11 and cursed the God of heaven for their pain and sores. They did not repent of their deeds.

- The bowl judgments are a picture of when God says, "*Enough is enough!*" The cup of his wrath is filled up and overflowing.
- They are a picture of God's holy hatred of sin and the rebellious who remain impenitent.
- It is a picture of what our sins rightly deserve.
- Like the seven seals, and the seven trumpets, we don't interpret these literally, but symbolically, figuratively, and metaphorically.
- What they represent is a far worse reality than the images that are used to help us understand the magnitude of what is taking place.
- The bowl judgments reflect the intensification of the judgment that humanity is sitting under even at this very moment and until the appearance of our Lord.
  
- The bowl judgments parallel the seven trumpet judgments closely. Once again, we are seeing these visions as parallel accounts offering us a different perspective of the same series of events.
- Like the trumpet judgments, the bowl judgments are modeled after the Exodus plague account.

### TRUMPET/BOWL COMPARISON

- The trumpets show in a highly figurative manner things that seem to be stated more directly in the bowls.

- They present the plagues in the same order — they strike the created realm: first the earth, then the sea, then the rivers, then the sun.
- Then they strike the realm of the wicked with darkness, then a reference to the Euphrates, and then final judgment with the same imagery of lightning, thunder, earthquakes, and hail.
- The bowls are going back in time to explain in greater detail the judgments that have been happening throughout the age and how they will culminate in the final judgment.

## 1. DE-CREATION PRECEDES RE-CREATION

- What is God doing with these judgments?
- God is de-creating the sinful world like he did by upending the Egyptians with the plagues. The once powerful nation of Egypt was brought to its knees.
- God ordered the world in creation, taking what was formless and empty and then forming and filling it. Everything God made and ordered was declared 'good.'
- Man's sin introduced death into the world and chaos into God's good creation.
- And like the flood account, the bowl judgments symbolize God de-creating the sinful world so that it can be re-created.
- Before there can be a new heavens and a new earth, the sinful world has to be returned to primeval chaos.
- What we can draw hope from is that just like on the seventh day of Creation, God rested, with the pouring out of the last bowl, God says, "*It is done.*" (Rev. 16:17)

## 2. GOD'S JUDGMENTS ARE ABSOLUTE AND COMPLETE

- Like the seal and trumpet judgments, the earth's natural resources are struck.
- What mankind needs for survival: food, water, and shelter are completely compromised.
- 1st bowl - painful sores and boils. Upon whom? Those who bear the mark of the beast and worship his image. The sores represent some type of torment upon those who receive the idolatrous mark. Maybe like the spiritual and psychological torment of the 5th trumpet (9:4-6;10).
- 2nd bowl - the economic implications of maritime commerce destroyed, which is seen as the source of prosperity of Babylon in ch.18, is massive. This brings famine and scarcity. Like the 3rd horsemen of the seal judgments, this judgment produces scarcity and famine conditions on a global scale.
- 3rd bowl - fresh water turns to blood, not literally, but represents suffering that may lead to literal death.
- 4th bowl - idolatrous humanity is scorched with fire. OT language is used where God's wrath poured out is expressed figuratively as being accompanied by fire.
- 5th bowl - kingdom of the beast plunged into darkness. It was poured out on the throne of the beast. We saw that with Pergamum (Rev. 2:13), which was called the place where Satan's throne is. It was the center of the Imperial cult, and ultimately under great demonic influence and control.
- When God sent the plague of darkness in Egypt, it was God dethroning their false god Ra. This plague is designed to remind the ungodly that everything they have falsely trusted in is in vain. It cannot save them.

## 3. THE RESPONSE OF THE RIGHTEOUS AND THE WICKED

- These two responses couldn't be more distinct.

- There is a response from the third angel (v4,6) who pours out his bowl on the rivers and springs.
  - He extols the character of God in proclaiming, “*Just are you, O Holy One...*”
  - The basis for this declaration of God’s character is God’s avenging of the martyrs.
  - “*They shed the blood of the saints and the prophets, now you’re making them drink blood.*”
  - And then he says, “*It is what they deserve!*”
  - The punishment fits the crime. The wrath poured out is in direct proportion to the blood that the ungodly have spilled and the sin they have committed.
  - God is not unjust. It is God who established his moral law declaring proportionate retribution, “*eye for an eye, tooth for a tooth*”. (Exod. 21:24)
  - The altar responds... who is that? The souls of the martyrs who cried out to be avenged.
  - They add their ‘Amen’ to the angel’s declaration. They are vindicated.
  - Why do they respond like this? Seems like they are rejoicing that the wicked are being punished.
  - We should never gloat when judgment falls on the ungodly. What we do know is that God’s judgments are just. God is slow to anger and abounding in mercy, he is waiting, until the ungodly fill up the cup of his wrath.
  - Believers who are facing persecution, who have tasted the wrath of the Beast, are praying for God’s vindication, and it will come!
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- As the plagues are poured out on the ungodly, you would think that now they would repent and turn to the living God.
  - But that’s not what happens. V9 and 11 tells us that they curse the name of God who had power of these plagues, they curse the God of heaven for their pain and sores.
  - **Romans 1:21a** For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him,
  - Every single person knows there is a God.
  - The ungodly do not acknowledge God and repent because they suppress the truth that they know in unrighteousness.
  - And even as God is warning them through these judgments, is patient with them, is extending his mercy and grace in the offer of the gospel, they refuse.
  - Like the Egyptians and Pharaoh, the plagues do not soften them to the mercy of God being extended, it hardens their hearts.
  - Wrath does not produce repentance. It is the kindness of God that leads us to repentance (Rom. 2:4).
  - **Romans 2:5** But because of your hard and impenitent heart you are storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath when God’s righteous judgment will be revealed.
  - The gospel is the answer. It softens some and hardens others.

## CONCLUSION

- What is the difference between the two responses?
  - It’s not that both don’t deserve the wrath of God.
  - The difference is the blood of the Lamb. The difference is whose mark they bear.
  - The world will not keep on going forever without justice being done.
  - Justice being done on the great day of the wrath of the Lamb, or justice done as it is meted out upon the Lamb.
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- The ungodly, they will get what they rightly deserve.
  - But Christ took all the wrath of God upon himself, on the cross, so we would not taste of that wrath ourselves.

- This is God's justice. This is how serious God is about sin.
- And because of Christ's work, his just and true judgments will result in our eternal praise of Him!